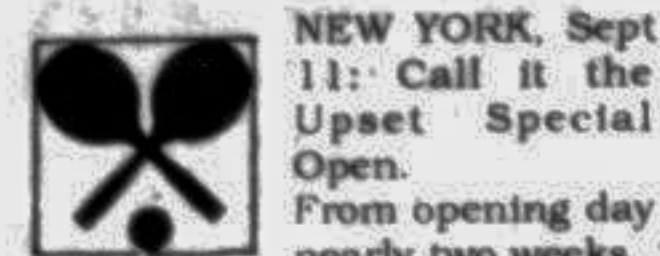


Sukova shuts door on Sanchez



NEW YORK, Sept. 11: Call it the upset Special Open. From opening day nearly two weeks ago through the women's semifinals, the US Open has been a wild and wacky affair, with favorites swept out of the year's final Grand Slam tournament with — for them — alarming regularity, writes AP.

On Day 1, ninth-seeded Petr Korda was an upset victim. No 6 Michael Stich, No 16 Andre Agassi and the women's No 7 seed, Jennifer Capriati, fell the next day.

No. 13 Ivan Lendl, a three-time US Open winner was gone on Day 3; No. 3 Stefan Edberg, the two-time defending cham-

ption, was dispatched on Day 4; and No 11 Goran Ivanisevic and women's No 9 Anke Huber were sent away on Day 5.

Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Helena Sukova, a "golden oldie" in this age of teen-age phenoms, continued the trend Friday by picking off second-seeded Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario 6-7, (7-9), 7-5, 6-2 to grab a spot in Saturday's women's final. Sukova, seed 12th, will meet top-seeded Steffi Graf, who eliminated upset-minded Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere 4-6, 6-1, 6-0.

Saturday's first men's semifinal sends 15th-seeded Cedric Pioline against unseeded Wally Masur. The second semi, following the women's title match,

pits No. 2 Pete Sampras against No 14 Alexander Volkov.

"I believe I'm a better player now," said Sukova, making her fourth career Grand Slam final appearance and her second trip to the title match at the National Tennis Centre. "And I deserve it. I'm more ready, better than I was in '86."

Against Sanchez-Vicario, it was the same Sukova who knocked out No. 3 Martina Navratilova in the fourth round. Now she is the lowest seeded women's finalist at the US Open since 16th-seeded Pam Shriver in 1978.

Sukova began to assume control in her semifinal midway through the second set as a few rain drops splattered on the court. A hard rain drenched the

court after Sukova held serve to being the third set, interrupting play for nearly 45 minutes.

"I wasn't unhappy with the break," Sukova said. "The break helped me. I decided to play better. I ran better. We've been going on and off all the time. I'm getting used to it."

When the two returned to the court, it was all Sukova, who grabbed control of the net and ran off point after point with crisp volleys. And when she did stay back, she slammed groundstrokes for winners.

"I had my chances and I didn't take them," Sanchez-Vicario said. "Today wasn't my best day. I'm happy for her. One or the other has to win."

In the second semifinal, Maleeva-Fragniere, who has said this will be her last US Open, almost followed Sukova into the winner's circle.

Playing with a broken little finger on her left hand, Maleeva-Fragniere broke Graf twice to start the match and survived an incredibly long, intense 28-point game to hold to 5-3. She closed out the first set with a love game, the final point coming on a wicked backhand slice cross-court that Graf just stared at.

"I just couldn't get going," Graf said. "I made a lot of easy mistakes. I was surprised I was tight in the beginning, not ready for the match. Sometimes I have to remain myself of who I am and how I can play tennis."

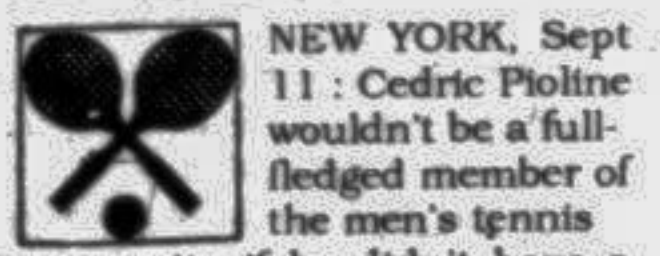
Graf, who made 19 errors in the first set, pounded balls into the corners in the second set while working on Maleeva-Fragniere's two-handed backhand. In the second set, Graf lost just five points on her serve and had nine unforced errors.

"I felt pain on the backhand return," Maleeva-Fragniere said. "I was playing just to put the ball in somehow."

Once Graf took control at 3-0, she never let go.

"It seemed she put every ball one inch over the net, one inch inside the baseline," Maleeva-Fragniere said. "It was difficult going for shots. Physically, she's stronger. I had the feeling I had to hit three times harder than usual. It just took too much out of me."

Pioline's routine gripes



NEW YORK, Sept. 11: Cedric Pioline wouldn't be a full-fledged member of the men's tennis community if he didn't have a complaint about the US Open.

So Pioline, who played Wally Masur in a men's semifinal Saturday, enthusiastically announced his problems with the season's final Grand Slam event, reports AP.

"It is a hard tournament because it's a long way from the city," he began. "The food is not so good. It's noisy and the players lounge is so small."

And then there is the scheduling. No. 2 Pete Sampras and No. 14 Alexander Volkov, the other half of Saturday's men's semis, were off Thursday and Friday. Pioline, the first Frenchman in the semifinals of this tournament since Henri

Cochet in 1932, was unhappy with that.

"I think it is not fair," said Pioline, who burst into prominence when he knocked off No. 1 ranked Jim Courier in the round of 16. "Sampras and Volkov get two days, rest and I have only one."

None of this bothers Masur, who at age 30 is thoroughly enjoying the most successful Open of his career.

After dropping the first two sets and then trailing 0-5 in the fifth set against countryman Jamie Morgan in the round of 16, Masur squirmed off the hook and somehow won the match. After staging that escape, he can't complain.

Masur nearly pulled the same kind of getaway against Pioline in their only previous meeting, earlier this summer at Wimbledon. He lost the first two

sets, then won the next two before losing the fifth 8-6.

Volkov and Sampras have split two matches this year. Overall, the American holds a 7-2 edge in head-to-head meetings.

Because he's an unseeded underdog and a senior citizen in the tenny-bopper world of tennis, Masur has become a crowd favorite.

"They can make as much noise as they want as far as he's concerned."

"The crowd got behind me," he said. "I have a good feeling here. The New York crowd is a vocal crowd. It's great when they're on your side."

That could complicate things for Pioline, the No. 15 seed. "I will try to do my best," he said, "and we will see on Saturday. And maybe we will see on Sunday."

Chinese dream run unabated



BEIJING, Sept. 11: Chinese women continued their astounding dominance of distance running Saturday as Qu Yunxia slashed more than two seconds off the world record in the 1,500 metres, reports AP.

Qu, the 21-year-old world champion in the 3,000 metres, ran the 1,500 metres in 3 minutes, 50.46 seconds, the official Xinhua news agency reported. Xinhua at first reported her time as 3:50.1, but later issued a corrected time.

Earlier this week, teammate Wang Junxia set a new world record for the 10,000 metres. Both were competing in China's 7th National Games.

Ma Zunren, their coach, predicted another world record Monday in the women's 3,000 metres.

Qu broke the previous record of 3:52.47 set by Tatjana Kazankina of the former Soviet Union, on Aug. 13, 1990 in Zurich, Switzerland. Wang

came in second in 3:51.92, also beating the old record, Xinhua said.

Their teammate, Liu Dong, 1,500-metre world champion, set an astonishing pace at the start of the race, with Qu and Wang on her heels. The three finished the first lap in 57 seconds, well ahead of the world record, and completed the first two laps in 2:00.1.

With Liu fading away for good, Qu and Wang maintained their record-breaking pace, running shoulder to shoulder. Qu surged ahead at the bell, with Wang one metre behind. With 200 metres to go, Wang tried to catch up, but Qu refused to give in.

The sudden dominance of Chinese women in the distance events has raised questions of possible drug use.

The first question Qu faced at a news conference after winning the gold in the 3,000 metres at the World Championships in Stuttgart, Germany last month was, "How many

times have you been tested over the last few months?" She said three times, all negative.

Wang's amazing time for the 10,000 metres, 29:31.78, or 42 seconds off the previous world record, also has raised suspicions of drug use.

A newspaper Friday reported in detail Wang's post-race urine collection for drug testing, in an apparent attempt to counter foreign criticism.

Her time, which showed her running particularly fast in the final 5,000 metres, also has raised speculation that she ran only 24 laps rather than the 25 needed to make 10,000 metres.

But a spokesman for the National Games, who gave only his surname, Qi, dismissed the possibility that Wang was one lap short.

"That's impossible. There were a lot of people watching," he said.

Qi added that judges and professional timekeepers from the Swiss watch company, Omega, all were on hand timing her.

Papa Becker

NEW YORK, Sept. 11: Boris Becker ended weeks of speculation on Friday when he told a German reporter he will become a father in January, reports Reuter.

Becker, who on Thursday said he and fiancée Barbara Felts plan to marry by the end of the year, will pass up January's Australian Open. He is planning on playing the Grand Slam Cup at the end of December and then will stay home for the birth of his first child.

Rumours have been rampant throughout the summer that Becker's fiancée was pregnant, but the German tennis star had repeatedly denied the impending birth.

The three-time Wimbledon champion and 1989 US Open winner claimed his last Grand Slam title at the 1991 Australian Open, a win that briefly made him the number one ranked player in the world.

Flach, Leach win US Open doubles

NEW YORK, Sept. 11: Ken Flach and Rick Leach, who have each piled up major titles with other partners, teamed up on Friday to claim the men's doubles crown at the US Open tennis championships, reports Reuter.

The 12th-seeded American pair rallied to beat the unseeded team of Martin Damm and Karel Novacek of the Czech Republic 6-7 (3-7), 6-4, 6-2 and will split 200,000 dollars. Damm and Novacek shared 100,000 dollars.

"We got momentum after breaking service in the first game of the second set," said Flach after claiming the Open trophy.

That momentum continued to snowball into the third set as the Americans began to dominate, rolling to a commanding 5-1 lead in the decider.

"We're a good team. We both have a lot of experience. We clicked right from the start this year."

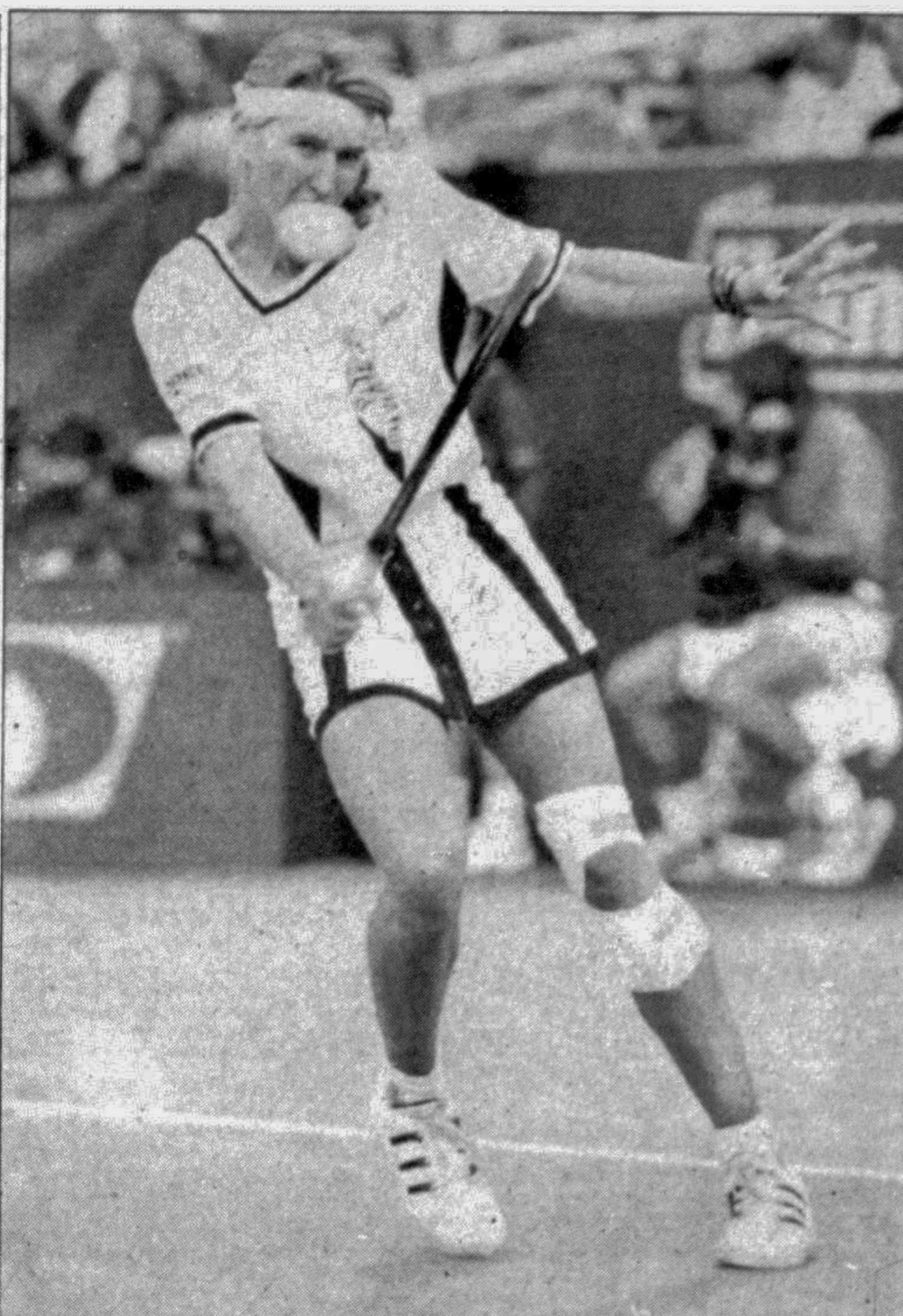
"We won the second tournament we ever played together at Tokyo," Flach said.

Experience may have been the key as both players have been in big doubles matches before.

Flach and longtime partner Robert Seguso were twice Wimbledon doubles champions, 1988 Olympic gold medalists and 1987 US Open doubles winners. They also won 10 successive Davis Cup matches during a stretch in the 1980s.

Leach has also enjoyed his share of past doubles success with former partner Jim Pugh. Leach and Pugh won Wimbledon in 1990 and the Australian Open title in 1988 and 1989.

They also tasted Davis Cup glory, clinching the 1990 Cup title against Australia.



World number one Steffi Graf of Germany about to make a backhand return during her semifinal match against Switzerland's Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere in the US Open tennis at the National Tennis Center on September 10. Graf made it to the final with a 4-6, 6-1, 6-0 victory.

Welcome to futurity

NEW YORK, Sept. 11: Welcome to the future of tennis information.

All around the National Tennis Center, computerized scoreboards flash point-by-point scoring information on the US Open to the crowds, media, and even the players lounge, reports AP.

The nerve center of this operation is buried in the bowels of the stadium and affectionately labeled The Bat Cave by the 20 or so technicians who disperse the information.

The cramped room holds 35 IBM computers that digest material from all the courts and permit anyone with access to follow any match in progress.

Using IBM hardware and software from Information and Display Systems, the operation delivers everything from player sketches to biographical background to service speeds.

For those who didn't make it to Flushing Meadows, IBM Sports installed a phone line that allowed tennis fans to phone in for match information during the tournament. More than 13,000 calls were received.

And for those attending the Open, there was the IBM Speed Zone, a fast serve contest. For a dir's 3 contribution to the Arthur Ashe Foundation for the Defeat of AIDS, fans took their swings.

Through the middle of the second week, the contest had raised dir's 10,000 with fastest serve by Christian George of Murrayville, Pa., who hit one at 128 mph (206 kph). That was 1 mph (1.6 kph) faster than the fastest recorded serve in the Open, going into the quarterfinal round.

Netherlands nip Norway to win World Open bridge

SANTIAGO, Sept. 11: Championship favorites the Netherlands won the World Open bridge tournament in Santiago on Friday in a close, sometimes wild match with Norway, reports Reuter.

The Netherlands, which won the Bermuda Bowl tournament 350 to 316, went into the final of the open 32 boards, 39 up and were pleased to discover a fairly quiet first 16 hands on which it lost two points to lead by 37 international match points (IMPs).

But in the final set, the Norwegians became wilder and the Norwegian pair Geir Helgeson and Tor Helness — two of the world's strongest individual players — took full advantage.

The pair bid a small slam, but got it wrong, an then they went down a game that could have been made.

The Netherlands' team, one of the youngest observers can remember, has had considerable success in European and world junior events over the last seven years and has been a force in open events for the last few years.

Earlier on Friday, USA-2 won the women's World Bridge Championships when they beat a tired German team by 53 IMPs.

USA-2, which led Germany by nine IMPs at the half of the Venice Cup, put on 63 IMPs in the third quarter and led comfortably there after to become the tournament champions.

Bowe says Tyson feels fine



CHICAGO, Sept. 11: The latest update on the physical and mental health of Mike Tyson comes from the man who some day may have to fight him.

"He said he feels fine and he's talking about getting his high school degree, then maybe going to college when he gets out," heavyweight champion Riddick Bowe said Friday, reports AP.

"At this point, it sounds like boxing is the farthest things from Mike's mind. Maybe he thinks that if he gets back into boxing right away, he'd fall into the same predicament he's in now."

Bowe visited with Tyson for an hour Thursday night at the Indiana Youth Center in Plainfield, Ind., where the former heavyweight champion is serving a six-year sentence following his 1992 conviction on rape charges. Bowe, who hails from the same corner of Brooklyn, N.Y. as Tyson, had promised to make the visit shortly after taking the heavyweight title

from Evander Holyfield last November.

He said the two shared a few laughs and memories about growing up in their tough Brownsville neighborhood. The 26-year-old Bowe also said Tyson, the older of the two fighters by 14 months, reminded him that he was too skinny as a kid to be regarded as a serious threat. Obviously, Tyson's opinion has changed since then.

"He told me he feels like I'm doing a good job and he warned me not to get caught up in all the falsehood that goes with the title," Bowe said.

"And he said the best thing I could do to make him proud, was to keep knocking all these other bums out."

Bowe stopped off in Chicago on Friday en route to Lake Tahoe, Nev., where he will begin training in earnest for a Nov 6 rematch with Holyfield. While taping some promos to hype the pay-per-view coverage of that fight, Bowe wore the same "Free Mike Tyson" T-shirt he had worn during his meeting with Tyson.

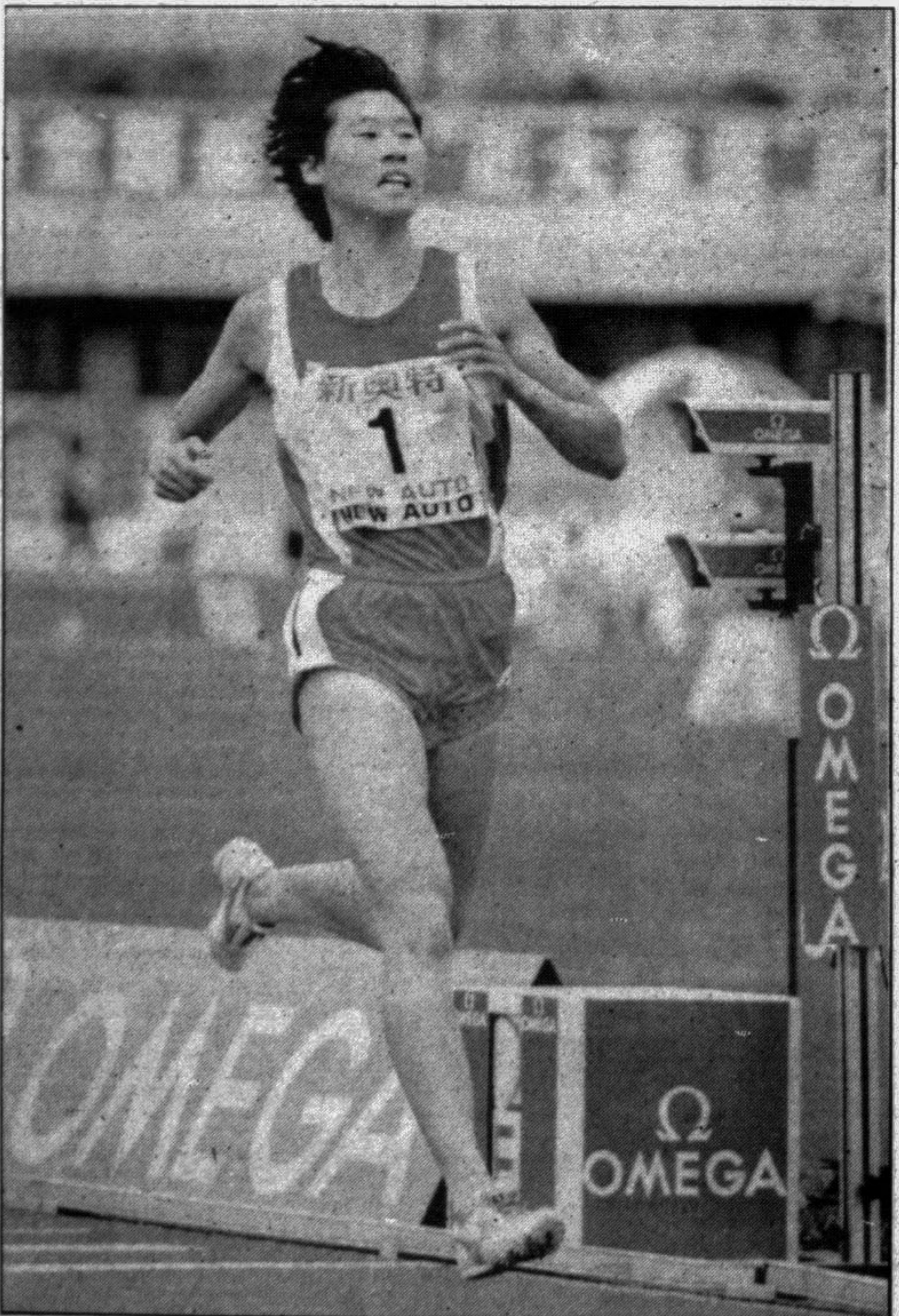
"The more information I got about what happened to him, the more I was convinced that he was railroaded... But what's going on with him and the courts is his business, right now," Bowe said. "I just wanted to lift his spirits some, let him know that people still support him."

Bowe said he was impressed with Tyson's apparent lack of bitterness over his fate and that he received several warnings from the former champion about how to conduct himself.

"He said to respect the position I have and not to abuse it the way he did," Bowe said.

Bowe's current career plans call for him to fight until he reaches the age of 30 or better Rocky Marciano's feat of retiring after 49 bouts without a defeat. He is 35-0, and given the lack of quality contenders in the heavyweight division, he stands a good chance of still being around and still being champion when Tyson leaves prison.

"And after I whup him... Bowe began with typical bluster, then caught himself.



Qu Yunxia, world 3,000 metres champion, crosses the finish line to set a new world record in the women's 1,500 metres at the seventh national games with a time of 3 minutes and 50.46 seconds.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Exemplar of patience
4 Verve
8 Cabbage concoction
12 Neighbor of Ga.
13 Diamond side
14 Rainy-day NYC lack
15 Chronological list
17 The yoke's on them
18 Stabbed
19 Promise
21 Beam
22 "The Emperor Jones" writer
26 Intimidated
29 Owing
30 Buck's mate
31 One of the Cartwright sons
32 Wrong: pref.
33 Space to maneuver
34 Charles Dutton

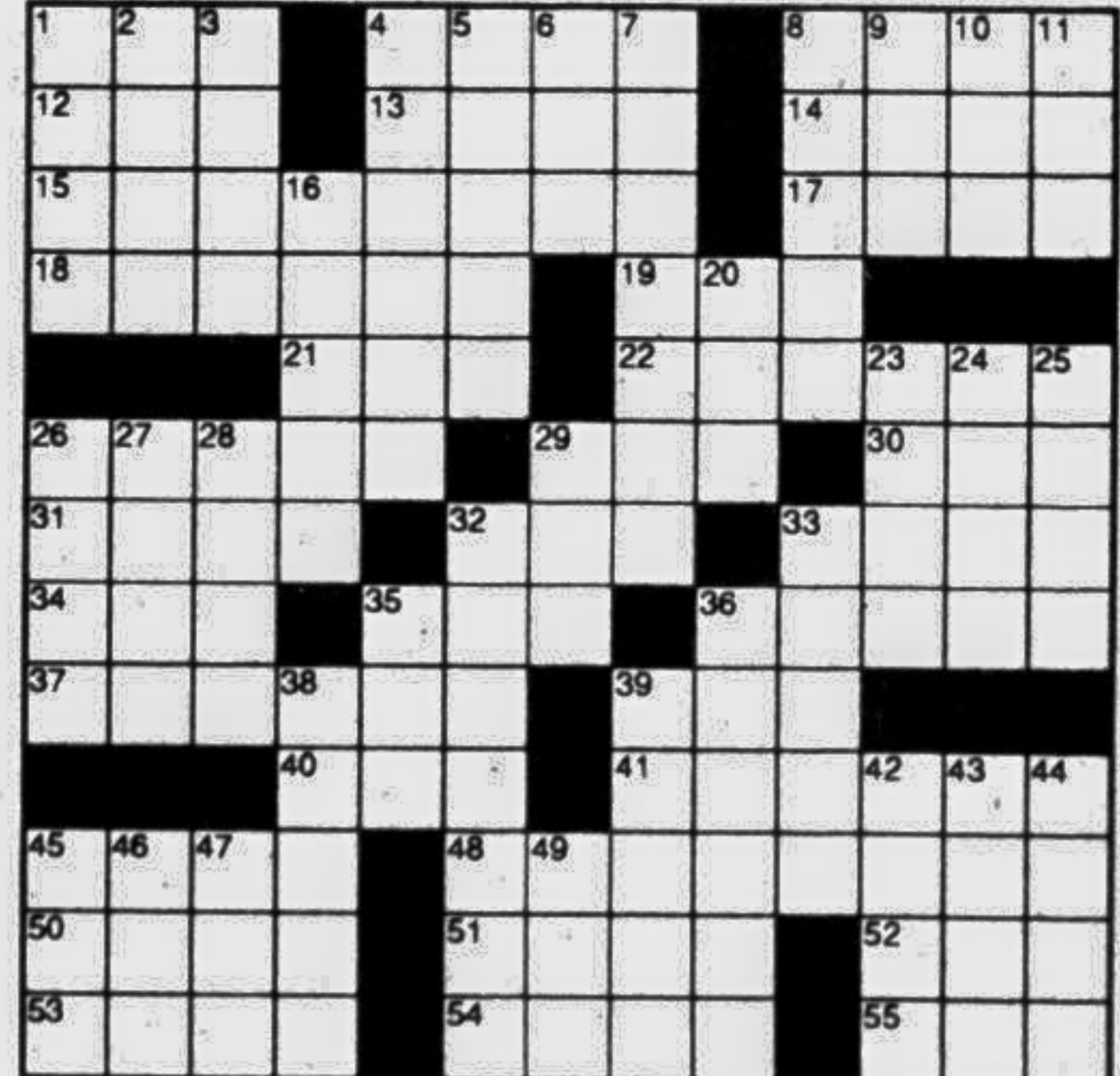
DOWN

1 Lemmon
3 The Good Earth
3 Indone-sian island
4 See 13
5 "Will" author
6 Literary collection
7 Tense
8 Legree's creator
9 Negligent
10 Give the pink slip to
11 Triumph
16 Stephanie's dad
20 Indivisible
23 Pedestal occupant
24 Appearance
25 Gaffer Tony
26 Caviar
27 Reputation
28 Texas radio station
29 Lose power
32 Docs
33 Leach or Wright
35 Symbol of entanglement
36 Tropical yellow fruit
38 Item for Vanna?
39 Score
42 Cheese-tray choice
43 Minimal change
44 Sea flock
45 Cistern
46 "How Can I Sure?"
47 Sargasso swimmer
49 Plata's partner

Solution time: 28 mins.

PAWS AYEM MER
OBIE CORE EDO
MESSIEURS SIS
PLEADERS TASTY
MO CRASH
FUME POE PALM
IKE ALE LEI
NEST GOD FLAX
SOWER OO
ALAMO ABRABE
COG MESSIANIC
IVE AMOK GISH
DES NUNS ELKO

Yesterday's answer 1-1



CRYPTOQUIP

TS WTSTWLW RFHLZTMC
UZTRPS, TSWIMFR XFQA
I XIUUC OTZMXAIC
HFQQ-FOZIMTPS
Yesterday's Cryptquip: WOUNDED WHILE CUTTING WOOD, THE CARPENTER CALLED HIS HURT FINGER HIS RIP SORE.
Today's Cryptquip clue: S equals N
The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.